

Effect of the Nature of Street Food Vending on Pro-Poor Hospitality: The Moderating Role of Creativity among Vendors in Mombasa City, Kenya

 Atingo Peruce,  Korir Jacqueline and  Sawe Belsoy

School of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management, Moi University, P.O. Box 3900–30100, Eldoret, Kenya

Abstract

Street food vending is a critical component of urban informal economies, yet its potential to drive pro-poor hospitality outcomes in tourism-dependent cities remains under-examined. This study investigated the effect of the nature of street food vending on pro-poor hospitality and tested creativity as a moderating influence among vendors in Mombasa City, Kenya. Anchored in Innovation Diffusion Theory and Informal Sector Theory, the study employed an explanatory correlational research design. A structured questionnaire was administered to 363 street food vendors, selected through multi-stage sampling from a target population of 10,364, supplemented by key informant interviews with vendor association leaders and public health officers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, linear regression, and Hayes' PROCESS Model 1; qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Pearson correlation revealed positive and significant associations among all study variables: nature of street food vending and pro-poor hospitality ($r = .539, p < .01$), creativity and pro-poor hospitality ($r = .693, p < .01$), and nature of street food vending and creativity ($r = .730, p < .01$). Regression results indicated that the nature of street food vending significantly predicted pro-poor hospitality ($\beta = .285, p < .001, R^2 = .540$). Creativity significantly moderated this relationship ($\beta = .329, p < .001$); conditional effects showed the relationship was non-significant at low creativity ($\beta = .014, p = .829$), but significant and progressively stronger at moderate ($\beta = .140, p = .003$) and high levels ($\beta = .271, p < .001$). Qualitative findings corroborated that strategic location, stable operating environments, hygiene compliance, and digital marketing enhanced service accessibility and inclusion. The study concludes that creativity is a boundary condition that determines whether improved vending practices translate into tangible pro-poor gains. It recommends county-level designation of protected vending zones, creativity-targeted vendor training incubators, and formal integration of street food into Mombasa's tourism value chain. This study offers the first empirical evidence that creativity moderates the street food–pro-poor hospitality nexus within a Kenyan coastal tourism context.

Correspondence: peruceatingo@gmail.com

Copyright © 2026 Atingo et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

Funding: The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article

Data Availability Statement: The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article [and/or] its supplementary materials or upon reasonable request.

Competing interests: The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Introduction

Background Information

Pro-poor hospitality is an approach within the tourism and hospitality industry that seeks to ensure that tourism activities generate tangible economic and social benefits for low-income and marginalized populations through employment creation, entrepreneurship, income generation, and participation in tourism value chains (Ashley et al., 2001). Rather than concentrating tourism benefits among large enterprises, pro-poor hospitality promotes inclusive participation by enabling local communities and informal entrepreneurs to become active contributors to tourism experiences. The concept is closely aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 8, which advocates inclusive and sustainable economic growth, productive employment, and decent work for all (UNWTO, 2022). However, despite sustained growth in global tourism, evidence indicates that tourism benefits continue to be unevenly distributed, with informal entrepreneurs receiving only marginal economic gains from tourism activities (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018; Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020).

Street food vending has increasingly become recognized not merely as an informal survival activity but as an important component of urban hospitality systems that provides authentic culinary experiences while generating livelihoods for low-income populations (Panicker & Priya, 2021). In many developing countries, including Kenya, street food vending contributes significantly to employment, food security, entrepreneurship, and local economic development (Downs et al., 2022). The sector has expanded rapidly due to urbanization, changing consumer lifestyles, increasing tourism, and relatively low barriers to business entry (Onego, 2024).

Beyond providing affordable meals, street food vendors increasingly employ creative practices to attract customers and remain competitive. Creativity refers to the generation and application of novel and useful ideas that improve products, services, customer experiences, or business processes (Amabile, 1996). In contrast, innovation involves implementing these creative ideas into commercially viable practices or technologies. Within street food vending, creativity is demonstrated

through culinary improvisation, unique food presentation, storytelling around traditional cuisine, personalized customer engagement, branding, and adaptation of recipes to tourist preferences. Innovation, on the other hand, includes adopting mobile payment platforms such as M-Pesa, digital marketing, menu diversification, online food delivery, and improved food safety practices. While innovation often reflects technological or business implementation, creativity represents the underlying capability that generates distinctive customer experiences and cultural value.

Mombasa City presents a unique setting for examining creativity in street food vending because of its rich Swahili-Arabic culinary heritage, which blends African, Arab, Indian, and Portuguese influences into distinctive food traditions. Popular delicacies such as biryani, pilau, viazi karai, mahamri, mishkaki, and madafu form part of the city's cultural identity and attract both domestic and international tourists seeking authentic culinary experiences. This cultural authenticity constitutes an important tourism resource by transforming street food into a cultural attraction rather than merely a source of inexpensive meals. Consequently, vendors' creativity in preserving, adapting, and presenting these culinary traditions has the potential to enhance tourists' experiences while simultaneously expanding economic opportunities for low-income households.

Despite this potential, a paradox exists within Mombasa's tourism economy. Street food vendors employ considerable grassroots creativity to attract visitors through authentic cuisine, cultural storytelling, flexible service delivery, and personalized customer interactions. However, formal tourism structures continue to marginalize these vendors through restrictive licensing requirements, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and weak

integration into organized tourism supply chains. Consequently, although vendors create significant tourism value, they often remain excluded from the mainstream hospitality economy, thereby limiting the realization of pro-poor hospitality.

Previous studies have predominantly examined street food vending from the perspectives of food safety, hygiene, public health, or informal employment, treating vendors primarily as informal economic actors rather than contributors to tourism and hospitality experiences. Similarly, studies on pro-poor tourism have largely focused on community-based tourism, hotel employment, and rural tourism enterprises while paying limited attention to urban street food vendors as creators of authentic tourism experiences. Consequently, little empirical evidence exists on how vendor creativity, cultural authenticity, and the structural characteristics of street food vending collectively influence pro-poor hospitality outcomes. Addressing this gap extends existing knowledge by positioning informal street food vendors not simply as beneficiaries of tourism but as creative hospitality entrepreneurs capable of strengthening inclusive tourism development.

Statement of the Problem

Tourism remains one of Kenya's leading economic sectors and Mombasa City accounts for a significant share of the country's coastal tourism activity. Despite continued growth in tourism, the economic benefits remain concentrated among hotels, resorts, restaurants, and established tourism enterprises, while many low-income residents continue to participate only marginally in tourism value chains (Kamau & Wairimu, 2020). This unequal distribution of tourism benefits limits the realization of pro-poor hospitality and undermines Sustainable Development Goal 8, which advocates

inclusive economic growth and decent work opportunities.

Street food vending provides an accessible entry point into the hospitality sector because it requires relatively low capital investment while creating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for economically disadvantaged populations. In Mombasa, street food vendors also preserve and showcase the city's distinctive Swahili culinary heritage, offering authentic food experiences that enrich tourists' cultural encounters. However, beyond simply selling food, many vendors rely on creativity through culinary improvisation, unique customer engagement, cultural storytelling, attractive food presentation, and adaptive marketing strategies to compete within the tourism market. These creative capabilities represent valuable hospitality assets that may strengthen pro-poor hospitality by increasing vendor participation in tourism value chains, improving livelihoods, and enhancing tourists' experiences.

Despite their creativity and cultural contribution, street food vendors remain largely excluded from formal tourism systems because of restrictive regulatory frameworks, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and weak institutional support. This paradox suggests that although vendors generate authentic tourism experiences, the hospitality system does not adequately recognize or integrate their contribution into mainstream tourism development.

Existing studies have largely examined street food vending from public health, hygiene, food safety, or informal economy perspectives, with limited attention to vendors as creative actors within hospitality and tourism. Similarly, studies on pro-poor hospitality have focused primarily on hotels, community tourism, and formal tourism enterprises while overlooking how vendor creativity, cultural authenticity,

and the structural characteristics of street food vending influence inclusive hospitality outcomes.

Consequently, little empirical evidence explains how grassroots creativity among street food vendors contributes to pro-poor hospitality within urban tourism destinations such as Mombasa. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and education may influence entrepreneurial creativity, business performance, and participation in tourism value chains; therefore, they will be controlled for to isolate the effects of the study variables. Addressing these gaps contributes not only to understanding street food vending in Mombasa but also advances global scholarship on pro-poor hospitality by demonstrating how informal culinary entrepreneurship can strengthen inclusive tourism development in emerging economies. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of the nature of street food vending on pro-poor hospitality in Mombasa City. The following hypothesis was tested while controlling for age, gender and education covariates.

H₀₁ The structural nature (accessibility and informality) of street food vending has no significant effect on pro-poor hospitality in Mombasa City.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on four complementary theoretical perspectives: Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity, Informal Sector Theory, and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Framework. Together, these perspectives explain how the structural characteristics of street food vending influence pro-poor hospitality, how creativity strengthens this relationship, why street food vending remains an important livelihood strategy within the informal economy, and how the resulting hospitality outcomes contribute to sustainable development.

Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT)

Innovation Diffusion Theory was developed by Everett M. Rogers (1962) to explain how innovations are communicated, adopted, and spread through a social system over time. The theory proposes that adoption follows five stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. According to Rogers (2003), innovation adoption depends on five perceived characteristics: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability.

The theory is relevant because street food vendors increasingly adopt innovations such as mobile payment platforms, digital marketing, improved food preservation techniques, online delivery services, environmentally friendly packaging, and enhanced hygiene practices. These innovations improve service efficiency, customer satisfaction, competitiveness, and access to tourism markets.

Within this study, Innovation Diffusion Theory explains how innovative practices enhance vendors' operational performance and increase participation in hospitality value chains. However, while the theory explains how innovations are adopted, it does not explain where creative ideas originate. This limitation necessitates the inclusion of a complementary creativity theory.

Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity

Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity was developed by Teresa M. Amabile (1983) and later refined in 1996. The theory proposes that creativity results from the interaction of three internal components: domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, and intrinsic motivation. Creative performance is further influenced by the surrounding social and organizational environment.

The theory distinguishes creativity from innovation. Creativity refers to generating novel and useful ideas, whereas innovation refers to implementing those ideas into products, services, or business practices. Within street food vending, creativity is demonstrated through culinary improvisation, unique menu development, attractive food presentation, storytelling around Swahili cuisine, personalized customer engagement, branding, and adaptation of traditional recipes to tourists' preferences. Innovation subsequently occurs when these creative ideas are translated into business practices such as digital marketing, mobile payment systems, or diversified service delivery.

The theory is particularly relevant because creativity constitutes the moderating variable in this study. Vendors with higher creative capability are more likely to transform the structural characteristics of street food vending into meaningful hospitality experiences that attract tourists, increase customer loyalty, strengthen tourism linkages, and improve income opportunities. Consequently, creativity strengthens the relationship between the nature of street food vending and pro-poor hospitality.

Informal Sector Theory

Informal Sector Theory was developed by Keith Hart (1973) to explain the role of informal economic activities in developing economies. The theory argues that informal enterprises are not merely residual economic activities but important sources of employment, entrepreneurship, and income generation for individuals excluded from formal labour markets. Such enterprises are characterized by low capital requirements, ease of entry, labour-intensive production, and limited regulation.

The theory is highly applicable because street food vending largely operates within the informal economy. In Kenya, the sector provides livelihood opportunities for individuals with limited access to formal employment while supporting urban food systems and local entrepreneurship.

Within the context of pro-poor hospitality, Informal Sector Theory explains how informal vendors participate in tourism despite institutional exclusion. Tourists increasingly seek authentic culinary experiences offered by informal vendors, enabling marginalized populations to derive income from tourism. Nevertheless, restrictive licensing, inadequate infrastructure, and limited institutional support constrain vendors' participation in formal tourism value chains. The theory therefore explains the structural conditions influencing the relationship between street food vending and pro-poor hospitality.

Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Framework

The Triple Bottom Line Framework was proposed by John Elkington (1994). Unlike the preceding theories, the TBL Framework is not primarily an explanatory theory but an evaluative framework for assessing sustainability through three interconnected dimensions: economic prosperity (Profit), social equity (People), and environmental responsibility (Planet).

In this study, the framework serves as a lens for evaluating the broader outcomes of pro-poor hospitality. Economically, street food vending creates employment, generates household income, and supports entrepreneurship. Socially, it promotes inclusion by providing opportunities for women, youth, and other marginalized groups while preserving Swahili culinary heritage and strengthening cultural tourism. Environmentally, sustainable practices such as proper waste disposal,

biodegradable packaging, and locally sourced ingredients contribute to responsible urban tourism.

Accordingly, the Triple Bottom Line Framework is used to assess whether pro-poor hospitality generated through street food vending contributes to sustainable tourism development rather than to explain causal relationships.

Literature Review

Street food vending constitutes a vital component of informal economies and urban food systems, characterized by low entry barriers, flexibility, affordability, and minimal capital requirements that enable economically disadvantaged populations to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Henderson, 2019; Panicker & Priya, 2021). Empirical evidence demonstrates that informal food enterprises significantly contribute to employment creation, household income generation, and poverty reduction in developing countries where formal employment remains scarce (Downs et al., 2022; Owuor, 2020). In East African cities, street food vending serves as a critical survival strategy for unemployed youth, women, and low-income households, fostering local economic resilience through income generation and entrepreneurship development (Njaya, 2014; Onego et al., 2023). In Kenya, major urban centres including Mombasa have witnessed substantial growth in informal food enterprises driven by rising demand for affordable meals and limited formal job opportunities, with vendors supporting tourism through the provision of local cuisines. However, existing scholarship has predominantly examined street food vending through employment and public health perspectives, leaving insufficient understanding of how its inherent characteristics such as accessibility, informality, flexibility, and affordability translate into hospitality

development and poverty reduction outcomes.

Cultural authenticity has emerged as a central dimension of contemporary tourism, with tourists increasingly seeking locally embedded culinary experiences that reflect historical identity and community heritage (Mutisya & Yarime, 2020). In coastal destinations such as Mombasa, street food represents an important expression of Swahili cultural identity, where traditional dishes including biryani, pilau, mahamri, and mishkaki provide authentic encounters beyond conventional hotel-based tourism (Chompupor et al., 2024; Gupta & Sharma, 2025). Despite this potential, limited research has examined how vendors in African coastal tourism contexts transform cultural authenticity into economic benefits for marginalized populations, with most studies focusing on cuisine as an attraction rather than on vendor participation in pro-poor hospitality outcomes.

Creativity has become increasingly recognized as a determinant of competitiveness and sustainability in informal hospitality enterprises. Defined as the generation of novel and useful ideas that enhance products, services, and customer experiences (Amabile, 1996), creativity in street food vending is manifested through menu adaptation, unique food presentation, storytelling, customer relationship management, and resource improvisation. African informal entrepreneurs have progressively adopted digital marketing, mobile money payments, social media promotion, and improved packaging to expand market reach and respond to evolving consumer preferences (Jack & Suri, 2011; Mwangi & Omondi, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated digital innovation adoption among informal food businesses, yet existing literature has largely overlooked creativity as an underlying capability that enables vendors to generate and implement

innovative hospitality practices. Moreover, creativity has rarely been examined as a moderator of the relationship between street food vending characteristics and pro-poor hospitality outcomes, representing a critical knowledge gap.

Pro-poor hospitality refers to tourism and hospitality approaches that intentionally increase economic and social benefits for disadvantaged populations through employment creation, entrepreneurship, and integration into tourism value chains (Ashley et al., 2001). Inclusive tourism development requires mechanisms that allow marginalized groups to access tourism markets, develop enterprises, and retain economic benefits rather than remaining passive beneficiaries (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Street food vending offers a viable pathway for pro-poor hospitality by enabling low-income populations to participate directly in tourism economies through food production and service delivery, thereby creating employment, generating income, preserving cultural heritage, and providing authentic tourist experiences. Nevertheless, evidence from Kenyan coastal tourism destinations remains limited, with most studies focusing on formal enterprises such as hotels and tour operators while overlooking informal hospitality actors.

Despite its economic contributions, street food vending remains constrained by institutional and regulatory barriers including licensing restrictions, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to finance, and weak integration into formal tourism structures (Mitullah, 2021). In Kenya, informal enterprises operate within a policy environment shaped by the Micro and Small Enterprises Act (2012), Kenya Vision 2030, and county-level frameworks such as the Mombasa County Integrated Development Plan; however, implementation challenges continue to

limit effective integration of informal businesses into formal economic systems. Consequently, street food vendors in Mombasa often face restricted access to tourism markets despite their contribution to authentic culinary experiences.

Although previous studies have examined street food vending from economic, public health, and informal sector perspectives, several gaps persist. First, limited empirical research has examined creativity in street food vending and informal hospitality despite its centrality to product differentiation and market responsiveness. Second, existing literature provides insufficient evidence on the relationship between street food vending characteristics and pro-poor hospitality outcomes, particularly regarding economic empowerment, tourism participation, and community inclusion. Third, the moderating role of creativity in determining whether vending

characteristics translate into improved hospitality outcomes remains underexplored. Fourth, limited research has focused on Mombasa's Swahili culinary tourism context despite the city's unique cultural heritage and significance as a coastal tourism destination. This study addresses these gaps by examining the effect of the nature of street food vending on pro-poor hospitality in Mombasa City while assessing the moderating influence of creativity.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework proposes that the nature of street food vending operationalized through accessibility, affordability, cultural authenticity, flexibility, and informality directly influences pro-poor hospitality outcomes, measured as economic empowerment, community linkages, social inclusion, and tourism value chain participation.

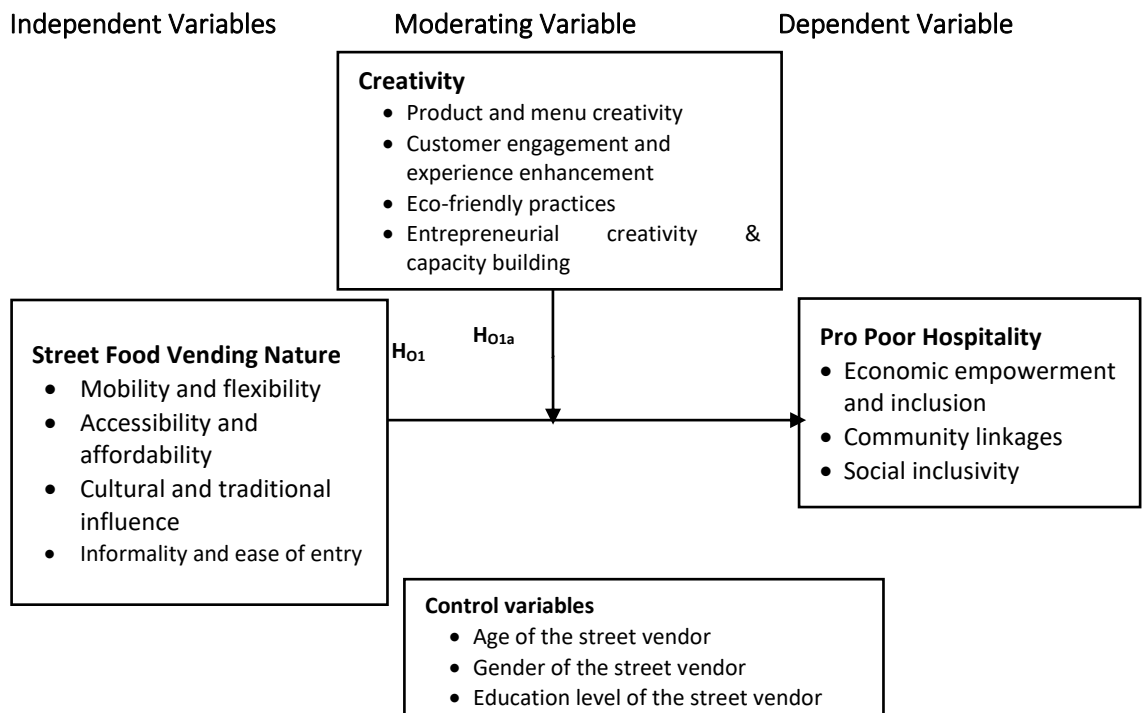


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

(Source: Developed by the Author (2026), adapted from Musavengane, Siakwah and Leonard (2019); Nikoi and Abbey (2023); and Amabile (1996).

Creativity is hypothesized to moderate this relationship, such that vendors who generate novel ideas (e.g., menu innovation, digital marketing, resource improvisation, and customer engagement) are better positioned to transform vending opportunities into differentiated hospitality experiences, thereby strengthening the positive effect of vending characteristics on pro-poor outcomes. Age, gender, and education are included as control variables to account for potential confounding influences on entrepreneurial behavior and business performance.

Methodology

This study was guided by the positivist research paradigm, which assumes that social phenomena can be objectively measured and analyzed through scientific procedures (May & Perry, 2022). This philosophical stance supported hypothesis testing via structured questionnaires and inferential statistical techniques, including regression and moderation analysis, to examine relationships among observable variables (Park et al., 2020). An explanatory correlational research design was adopted to determine the effect of the nature of street food vending on pro-poor hospitality and establish whether creativity moderates this relationship (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The study was conducted in Mombasa City, Kenya, the country's leading coastal tourism destination with a vibrant informal hospitality sector. Mombasa provides a unique context due to its rich Swahili culinary heritage including biryani, pilau, mahamri, and mishkaki which attracts tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences. Data were collected across six sub-counties (Mvita, Nyali, Kisauni, Changamwe, Jomvu, and Likoni), selected to capture diverse vending environments varying in tourism

exposure, customer profiles, and operating conditions.

The target population comprised street food vendors operating within Mombasa City. According to the Mombasa County Department of Trade, Tourism and Investment (2024), approximately 10,364 vendors were recorded in designated commercial areas; this official database served as the sampling frame despite potential underenumeration of informal operators. Using Yamane's (1973) formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 385 vendors was determined. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed: cluster sampling by sub-county, stratified sampling by location, vendor type, and gender, followed by simple random selection of respondents within each stratum to enhance representativeness.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire organized into five sections and all constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Content validity was established through expert review by specialists in tourism, hospitality, and research methodology.

Construct validity was assessed via exploratory factor analysis, examining Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, and factor loadings above 0.50. Internal consistency reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with $\alpha \geq 0.70$ deemed acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). A pilot study involving 38 vendors from a neighbouring coastal area was conducted to refine item clarity and suitability.

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 29. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarized respondent characteristics and variable distributions, while Pearson correlation analysis examined bivariate associations among nature of street food vending, creativity, and pro-poor hospitality. To test the direct effect of nature of street

food vending on pro-poor hospitality, simple linear regression was estimated:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots \text{Model 1}$$

Moderation Analysis

The moderating effect of creativity was tested using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 1; Hayes, 2018). The full moderation model was specified as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 C + \beta_3 (X * C) + \beta_4 Z + \epsilon \dots\dots \text{Model 2}$$

Where:

Y = Pro-poor hospitality

X = Nature of street food vending

C = Creativity

Z = Control variables (age, gender, education)

X*C represents the interaction between street food vending nature and creativity.

A significant interaction coefficient (β_3 , $p < 0.05$) would indicate that creativity significantly moderates the relationship.

ϵ is the error term

Results

Reliability and Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

The psychometric properties of the research instrument were assessed through reliability analysis and

exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the results of which are summarized in Table 1. Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot study was conducted in Kilifi Town ($n = 35$) to evaluate the internal consistency of the 58-item questionnaire. Using Cronbach's Alpha as the reliability metric, with thresholds set at $\alpha \geq 0.70$ for acceptable reliability, $\alpha \geq 0.80$ for good reliability, and $\alpha \geq 0.90$ for excellent reliability (George & Mallery, 2003), all five constructs met or exceeded the acceptable threshold: Nature of Street Food Vending (10 items, $\alpha = 0.76$), Location for Street Food Vending (11 items, $\alpha = 0.73$), Legal and Regulatory Requirements (10 items, $\alpha = 0.79$), Creativity (15 items, $\alpha = 0.82$, highest), and Pro-poor Hospitality (12 items, $\alpha = 0.78$), yielding an aggregate reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.78$. Concurrently, construct validity was examined through EFA using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.626, indicating moderate suitability for factor analysis, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2(10) = 69.075$, $p < 0.001$), confirming adequate interrelationships among variables.

Table 1: Reliability and Exploratory Factor Analysis Results of the Research Instrument

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	Factor Loading	Component
Legal and Regulatory Requirements	10	0.79	0.992	1
Location for Street Food Vending	11	0.73	0.999	2
Creativity	15	0.82	0.988	3
Pro-poor Hospitality	12	0.78	0.986	4
Nature of Street Food Vending	10	0.76	0.986	5
Aggregate	58	0.78		

Note: KMO = 0.626; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2(10) = 69.075$, $p < 0.001$. Two components with eigenvalues > 1 extracted, explaining 51.663% cumulative variance. Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Two components with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained

(1.563 and 1.020), jointly explaining 51.663% of the total variance. The

rotated component matrix revealed exceptionally high factor loadings exceeding 0.98 for all constructs, with each variable loading distinctly on its own component: Legal and Regulatory Compliance on Component 1 (0.992), Vending Location on Component 2 (0.999), Creativity on Component 3 (0.988), Pro-Poor Hospitality on Component 4 (0.986), and Nature of Vending on Component 5 (0.986). Consequently, the overall instrument deemed reliable and valid for examining the effect of the nature of street food vending on pro-poor hospitality, with creativity as a moderating variable among vendors in Mombasa City, Kenya.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2 summarizes the demographic composition of the 363 street food vendors surveyed in Mombasa City. The sample was predominantly male (55.6%), young to middle-aged (67.3% aged 20–40 years), and moderately educated, with the majority holding secondary education (27.8%) or certificate/diploma qualifications (27.3%). This profile reflects an economically active, experienced workforce with diverse educational backgrounds, providing a representative basis for examining the relationships between vending practices, creativity, and pro-poor hospitality outcomes.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	202	55.6
	Female	161	44.4
Education	Secondary	101	27.8
	Certificate/Diploma	99	27.3
	Bachelor's Degree	90	24.8
	Post-graduate	64	17.6
	Other	9	2.5
Age (years)	20–30	128	35.3
	31–40	116	32.0
	41–50	59	16.3
	> 50	60	16.5

Source: Research Data, 2025

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationships between pro-poor hospitality outcomes (PPHO) and the independent variable nature of street food vending (NSFV), and creativity (CRT). The nature of street food vending is also positively and significantly associated with pro-poor hospitality outcomes ($r = 0.539$, $p < 0.01$). Although moderate compared to other predictors, this relationship indicates that characteristics such as affordability, accessibility, cultural

authenticity, and customer engagement meaningfully support inclusive hospitality development. Creativity exhibits a strong positive relationship with pro-poor hospitality outcomes ($r = 0.693$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that innovative practices such as menu diversification, digital marketing, eco-friendly packaging, and branding enhance competitiveness and customer appeal, thereby improving income opportunities and social visibility for street food vendors.

Table 3: Correlations among study variables

Variable	PPHO	NSFV	CRT
Pro poor hospitality Outcomes (PPHO)	1		
Nature of street food vending (NSFV)	.539**	1	
Creativity (CRT)	.693**	.730**	1

Source: Research Data, 2025

Regression Analysis

Hierarchical linear regression was conducted to examine the direct effect of nature of street food vending on pro-poor hospitality outcomes. The results indicate a strong overall model fit. As presented in Table 4, the linear regression model showed a high correlation between the predicted and observed values of pro-poor hospitality, with $R = 0.735$. The model explained 54.0% of the variance in pro-poor hospitality ($R^2 = 0.540$), and the adjusted R^2 of 0.532 confirms that the model accounts for a substantial proportion of variance even after adjusting for the predictor. The standard error of the

estimate was 0.285, indicating that the observed values, on average, fall reasonably close to the regression line and reflecting a precise model. The change statistics further demonstrate that the inclusion of the predictor where nature of vending significantly improved the model fit, with $\Delta R^2 = 0.540$, $F(1, 361) = 140.20$, $p < .001$, showing that this predictor provides a statistically significant explanation of pro-poor hospitality. Finally, the Durbin-Watson statistic = 1.768 falls within the acceptable range (1.5–2.5), suggesting that there is no serious autocorrelation in the residuals, and the assumption of independent errors is satisfied.

Table 4: Model Summary
Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.735 ^a	.540	.532	.28500	.000	1.768

a. Predictors: (Constant), Nature of Vending

b. Dependent Variable: Pro Poor Hospitality

Source: Research Data, 2025

The ANOVA results presented in Table 5 confirms that the regression model is a good fit, and that the nature of vending significantly predict pro-poor hospitality.

This provides strong evidence that this factor is an important determinant of pro-poor hospitality outcomes in the study context.

Table 5: Model Fitness
ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	34.200	3	11.400	140.200	.000 ^b
Residual	29.300	359	.082		
Total	63.500	362			

a. Dependent Variable: Pro Poor Hospitality

b. Predictors: (Constant), Nature of Vending

Source: Research Data, 2025

The regression coefficients presented in Table 6 indicate the unique contribution of the predictor to pro-poor hospitality. The intercept (constant) was 0.960 ($t = 7.68$, $p < .001$), representing the baseline level of pro-poor hospitality when the predictor is at zero. Nature of vending was a significant positive

predictor ($B = 0.255$, $\beta = 0.285$, $t = 6.38$, $p < .001$), indicating that for every one-unit increase in the quality or nature of vending, pro-poor hospitality increases by 0.255 units, holding other factors constant. This suggests a moderate and meaningful effect of vending practices on hospitality outcomes.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	0.960	0.125			7.680	.000
Nature of Vending	.255	.040	.285		6.375	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Pro Poor Hospitality

Source: Research Data, 2025

Moderating Effect of Creativity on the Relationship between Nature of Vending and Pro Poor Hospitality

A moderation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 1 (Hayes, 2018) to examine whether creativity moderates the relationship between nature of vending and pro-poor hospitality (Figure 1). The overall model was statistically significant, $F(3, 359) = 17.53$, $p < .001$, explaining 12.78% of the variance in pro-poor hospitality ($R^2 = .1278$). Both nature of vending ($\beta = -0.8465$, $p = .0009$) and creativity ($\beta = -0.9396$, $p = .0004$) had significant main effects on pro-poor hospitality. Importantly, the interaction between nature of vending and creativity was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.3287$, $p < .001$), indicating that creativity moderates the relationship between nature of vending and pro-poor hospitality. The interaction term contributed a significant increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .0437$, $F(1, 359) = 18.01$, $p < .001$).

To probe the interaction, conditional effects were examined at low (16th percentile), moderate (50th

percentile), and high (84th percentile) levels of creativity. The results presented in Table 6 reveal that at low levels of creativity ($W = 2.62$), the effect of the nature of vending on pro-poor hospitality was not significant ($\beta = 0.0137$, $p = .8288$), indicating that when creativity is low, improvements in vending practices have little impact on pro-poor hospitality. At moderate levels of creativity ($W = 3.00$), the effect became positive and significant ($\beta = 0.1397$, $p = .0034$), suggesting that average levels of creativity enhance the impact of vending practices on hospitality outcomes. At high levels of creativity ($W = 3.40$), the effect was stronger and highly significant ($\beta = 0.2712$, $p < .001$), demonstrating that creativity amplifies the positive effect of nature of vending on pro-poor hospitality, with more creative individuals translating improvements in vending practices into greater hospitality outcomes. These findings indicate that the positive effect of nature of vending on pro-poor hospitality increases as creativity rises, confirming a significant moderation effect.

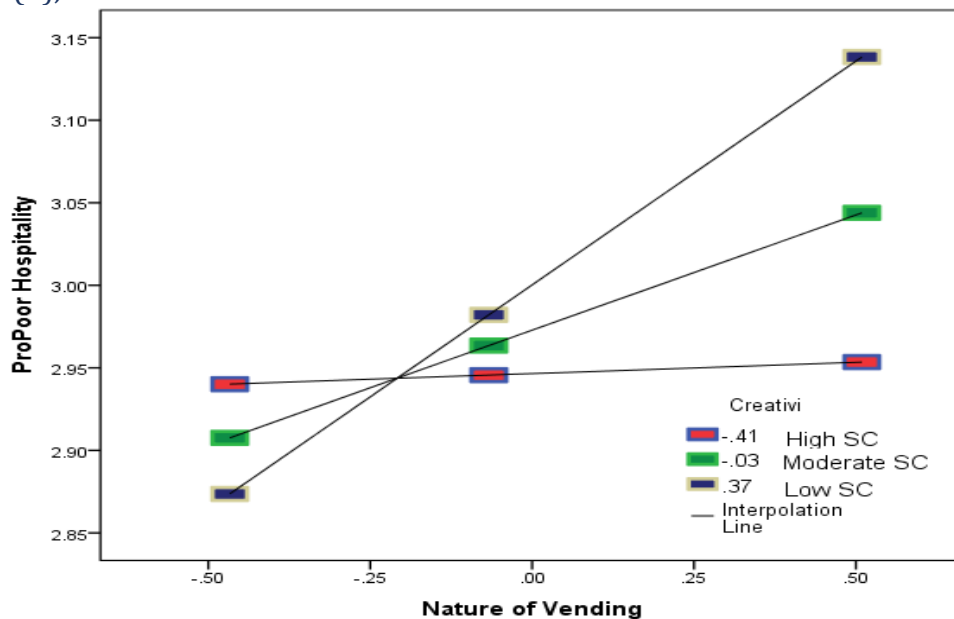


Figure 1: Nature of vending on pro-poor hospitality

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative results by demonstrating that street food vending provides affordable food and employment opportunities, particularly for women, youth, and other economically marginalized groups. Participants highlighted low entry barriers, flexible operating conditions, and minimal capital requirements as factors that facilitate participation in the hospitality sector. Vendors also emphasized the importance of direct customer interaction, personalized service, and repeat patronage in sustaining their businesses and incomes. Furthermore, vendor association leaders noted that street food vending contributes to household welfare by enabling vendors to meet basic needs, support their families, and finance educational expenses. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings confirms that street food vending contributes significantly to pro-poor hospitality outcomes by promoting income generation, food accessibility, social inclusion, and economic participation among vulnerable urban populations.

Accessibility and Customer Access

The importance of vending location in enhancing customer access and income generation emerged strongly from the interviews. Association leaders emphasized that strategic locations attract more customers and improve business performance. Proximity to transport hubs, markets, and commercial centers was identified as a critical factor in ensuring that low-income consumers can readily access affordable food services.

"A good location guarantees customers, while a poor one discourages sales regardless of food quality" (KI-05).

Customer Retention and Service Continuity

The interviews further revealed that disruptions to vending operations negatively affect customer access and trust. Relocation of vendors was identified as a major challenge that undermines the stability of vendor–customer relationships and reduces service accessibility.

"When vendors are relocated, it takes time to rebuild trust and attract customers again" (KI-04).

Hygiene and Food Safety Practices

Public health officers highlighted the importance of maintaining hygiene and food safety standards through regular inspections and monitoring. Compliance with hygiene standards was viewed as essential for building consumer confidence and improving the quality of services offered to low-income populations.

"We conduct regular inspections and issue notices where standards are not met, followed by re-inspection" (PHO-01).

Capacity Building and Vendor Skills

Interview participants emphasized the need for broader training opportunities beyond hygiene compliance. Skills in marketing, financial management, and business planning were identified as critical gaps that, if addressed, could enhance service delivery, customer satisfaction, and business sustainability.

"Training mainly focuses on hygiene, but vendors also need skills on marketing and financial management" (KI-07).

Adoption of Modern Customer-Oriented Practices

Association leaders reported that some vendors have embraced digital marketing strategies to improve customer engagement and visibility. The use of social media platforms to advertise meals and interact with customers was noted as an emerging practice that expands market reach and improves service accessibility.

"Some vendors now advertise their meals online, which has increased visibility" (KI-09).

Provision of Safe and Appropriate Vending Infrastructure

Public health officers and vendors emphasized the importance of designated vending spaces equipped with

essential facilities such as clean water, waste disposal systems, and shelter. Well-organized vending environments were seen as supporting food safety, customer comfort, and service quality.

"If vendors are provided with proper spaces and facilities, compliance becomes much easier" (PHO-06).

"If we had proper food hubs, business would be better and safer" (V-09).

Affordability and Demand for Street Food Services

Vendors perceived the street food sector as growing due to increasing demand for affordable meals among urban populations. The ability to provide low-cost food options was identified as a core contribution of street food vending to pro-poor hospitality.

"Customers are many, but costs and rules keep changing" (V-10).

Hence, these qualitative findings support the quantitative results that the nature of street food vending significantly influences pro-poor hospitality outcomes. Factors such as strategic location, hygiene standards, stable operating environments, continuous training, innovation, adequate infrastructure, and affordable food provision enhance accessibility, service quality, customer satisfaction, and inclusivity for low-income populations in Mombasa City.

Discussion

The findings establish that the nature of street food vending significantly predicts pro-poor hospitality outcomes among vendors in Mombasa City, supporting the argument that informal food enterprises serve as viable pathways for poverty reduction when marginalized populations are integrated into tourism value chains (Ashley et al., 2001; Mitchell & Ashley, 2010). Quantitatively, vending characteristics explained a substantial proportion of variance in hospitality outcomes ($R^2 = .540$), while qualitative

narratives reinforced that accessibility, affordability, and flexible operations enable vendors to generate income and sustain livelihoods in resource-constrained urban environments (Njaya, 2014; Onego et al., 2023). Nevertheless, structural constraints including weak linkages to formal hospitality systems, restrictive regulatory environments, and inadequate infrastructure limit the sector's capacity to fully capture tourism benefits, pointing out the need for supportive institutional frameworks and stronger value chain integration.

Creativity emerged as both a significant direct predictor and a critical moderator of the vending–hospitality relationship, aligning with Amabile's (1996) Componential Theory of Creativity and extending pro-poor tourism scholarship by demonstrating that entrepreneurship capability functions as an enabling mechanism for inclusive hospitality outcomes. The strong positive correlation ($r = .693$) and significant interaction effect ($\beta = .329, p < .001$) indicate that vendors who employ creative strategies such as menu adaptation, digital marketing, and personalized customer engagement are better positioned to transform vending opportunities into tangible economic and social benefits. Conditional effects further revealed that the benefits of improved vending practices were negligible at low creativity levels but strengthened progressively at moderate and high levels, confirming that creativity is a threshold competency that determines whether informal vendors successfully convert limited resources into valuable tourism experiences. Although negative main effect coefficients appeared in the moderation model, these reflect mean-centering artifacts; the positive interaction term and significant conditional effects affirm that creativity amplifies the contribution of street food vending to pro-poor hospitality.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of the nature of street food vending on pro-poor hospitality outcomes in Mombasa City, Kenya, with creativity tested as a moderator. Findings indicate that vending characteristics significantly predict pro-poor hospitality ($\beta = .285, p < .001, R^2 = .540$). Creativity significantly moderated this relationship ($\beta = .329, p < .001$): the effect of vending practices on hospitality outcomes was non-significant at low creativity ($\beta = .014, p = .829$), but strengthened progressively at moderate ($\beta = .140, p = .003$) and high levels ($\beta = .271, p < .001$), confirming that creativity operates as a threshold competency rather than an additive benefit.

Qualitative data corroborated these results, highlighting strategic location, stable operating environments, hygiene compliance, and digital engagement as key enablers. Theoretically, the study extends Innovation Diffusion Theory and Informal Sector Theory by demonstrating that informal enterprise characteristics foster inclusive hospitality when mediated by creative capability and provides the first empirical evidence within the Kenyan coastal tourism context that creativity functions as a boundary condition in the street food vending–pro-poor hospitality nexus. Limitations include the cross-sectional design, which precludes causal inference; reliance on self-reported measures, which may introduce social desirability bias; the high intercorrelation between vending characteristics and creativity ($r = .730$) and geographic boundedness to Mombasa's Central Business District, which limits generalizability.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations are organized by stakeholder and implementation level. Each recommendation is designed to be

actionable, measurable, and contextually appropriate for Mombasa County's informal food economy.

Policy and Regulatory

1. The Mombasa County Department of Trade, Tourism and Investment should review existing bylaws to replace punitive relocation practices with negotiated designation models. Specifically, the County should establish legally protected vending zones in high-traffic areas (transport terminals, markets, and heritage tourism corridors) equipped with water points, sanitation facilities, and waste disposal infrastructure. Success indicator: Number of designated vending zones operationalized within 24 months.
2. The County should formally incorporate street food vending into the Mombasa County Integrated Development Plan and destination marketing materials. This includes developing culinary tourism trails that link Swahili street food experiences with heritage sites (e.g., Fort Jesus, Old Town), thereby strengthening vendor integration into formal tourism value chains. Success indicator: Inclusion of street food in at least one official county tourism campaign within 12 months.
3. County policy should explicitly align with Kenya's Micro and Small Enterprises Act, 2012, and the Sustainable Development Goal 8 agenda by recognizing street food vendors as legitimate MSE actors entitled to technical support and protection from arbitrary eviction.

Institutional and Sector

1. Street food vendor associations, in partnership with the County

Department of Trade and civil society organizations, should establish vendor creativity incubators offering structured capacity-building in:

- Innovative food presentation and Swahili culinary heritage branding;
 - Digital marketing and social media storytelling (WhatsApp Business, Instagram);
 - Eco-friendly packaging and sustainable sourcing;
 - Customer engagement and financial record-keeping. Training should be modular, delivered in Kiswahili and English, and scheduled during off-peak vending hours. Success indicator: At least 200 vendors trained annually, with pre- and post-training creativity assessments showing a minimum 15% mean score improvement.
2. Tourism sector stakeholders, including hotel associations and tour operators, should develop vendor partnership programs that formally link street food vendors with hospitality supply chains (e.g., catering for cultural events, hotel staff meals, or tourist food excursions). Success indicator: Number of formal vendor-tourism enterprise partnerships established and documented quarterly.
 3. To address the chronic absence of reliable informal sector data, the County should invest in a digital street food vendor registry capturing vendor location, product type, and training needs. This registry would simultaneously support evidence-based policy, public health monitoring, and research. Success indicator: A pilot registry

covering at least 50% of CBD vendors operational within 18 months.

Practice

Vendors are encouraged to form savings and marketing cooperatives to pool resources for bulk purchasing, collective bargaining for designated spaces, and joint digital marketing campaigns. Additionally, vendors should proactively adopt customer feedback mechanisms (e.g., simple suggestion boxes or WhatsApp rating systems) to continuously refine service quality and menu innovation.

Future Research

- Experimental studies testing the efficacy of structured creativity training programs on vendor income and hospitality outcomes are needed to validate the moderating role of creativity.
- Complementary research examining tourist and low-income consumer perceptions of street food quality, safety, and cultural authenticity would provide a demand-side counterpart to this supply-side analysis.
- Future research should evaluate the socioeconomic impacts of designated vending zone policies where implemented, to inform scalable regulatory models.

References

- Amabile, T. M. (1983). The social psychology of creativity: A componential conceptualization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45(2), 357–376. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.45.2.357>
- Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: Update to the social psychology of creativity*. Westview Press.
- Ashley, C., Boyd, C., & Goodwin, H. (2000). *Pro-poor tourism: Putting poverty at the heart of the tourism agenda*. Overseas Development Institute. <https://odi.org/en/publications/po-poor-tourism-putting-poverty-at-the-heart-of-the-tourism-agenda/>
- Ashley, C., Roe, D., & Goodwin, H. (2001). *Pro-poor tourism strategies: Making tourism work for the poor*. Overseas Development Institute. <https://odi.org/en/publications/po-poor-tourism-strategies-making-tourism-work-for-the-poor/>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Elkington, J. (1994). Towards the sustainable corporation: Win-win-win business strategies for sustainable development. *California Management Review*, 36(2), 90–100. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4116574>
- Elkington, J. (1998). *Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business*. New Society Publishers.
- Hart, K. (1973). Informal income opportunities and urban employment in Ghana. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11(1), 61–89. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00008089>
- Hayes, A. F. (2022). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A*

- regression-based approach* (3rd ed.).
- Henderson, J. C. (2019). Street food, tourism and local identity. *Tourism Review International*, 23(4), 305–318.
- Jack, W., & Suri, T. (2011). Mobile money: The economics of M-Pesa. *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 16721*.
<https://doi.org/10.3386/w16721>
- Jeyacheya, J., & Hampton, M. P. (2020). Wishful thinking or wise policy? The role of tourism in poverty reduction. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(2), 346–368.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2018.1477178>
- Lee, K., & Kwek, A. (2020). Tourists' perceptions of street food and food trucks: Authenticity, experience and destination image. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 25(8), 789–803.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2020.1761811>
- May, T., & Perry, B. (2022). *Social research: Issues, methods and research* (5th ed.). Open University Press.
- Mitchell, J., & Ashley, C. (2010). *Tourism and poverty reduction: Pathways to prosperity*. Earthscan.
- Mitullah, W. V. (2003). *Street vending in African cities: A synthesis of empirical findings from Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Uganda and South Africa*. World Development Report Background Paper.
- Park, Y. S., Konge, L., & Artino, A. R. (2020). The positivism paradigm of research. *Academic Medicine*, 95(5), 690–694.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000003093>
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre and every business is a stage*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Republic of Kenya. (2008). *Kenya Vision 2030*. Government of Kenya.
<https://vision2030.go.ke/>
- Republic of Kenya. (2012). *Micro and Small Enterprises Act, 2012*. Government Printer.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). Free Press.
- Scheyvens, R., & Biddulph, R. (2018). Inclusive tourism development. *Tourism Geographies*, 20(4), 589–609.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2017.1381985>
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme. (2020). *The state of African cities 2020: Reimagining sustainable urbanization*. UN-Habitat. <https://unhabitat.org/>
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2021). *Recommendations for inclusive recovery and growth in tourism*. UNWTO.
<https://www.unwto.org/>
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2022). *Tourism and sustainable development goals: Journey to 2030*. UNWTO. <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development-goals>
- Yamane, T. (1973). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (3rd ed.). Harper & Row.